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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

VOL. 6 NO. 21
FIRST ISSUE OF
DECEMBER 1976
#143

THE COVER STORY

Santa Claus recognizes a good mode of transportation when he sees one, and here he's traveling from coast to coast on an Amtrak train, in this bit of Amtrak art by Nick Meyerowitz. Amtrak used this illustration on a brochure (printed in red and black) advertising its Package Express service, and in particular its five-dollar Santexpress special, detailed earlier in RTN. The special, which ran between Nov 10 and Dec 10, reportedly was very successful, in part due to the United Parcel Service strike in 15 Eastern states, which ended Dec 13 after lasting 86 days. We bring you this illustration by way of wishing you the best of holiday happiness. We hope you enjoy this big holiday issue, and have happy rail traveling now and in the coming year.

LETTERS

There appears to be an element of confusion at Amtrak on two accounts. They wax exuberant over the success of the new Amfleet cars and the ridership increases that follow their introduction in various places over the nation.

New equipment is all well and good but the newness is not the genuine attraction. The real value lies in that fact that the new equipment works. Old cars would rack up the same accomplishments if properly upgraded and striped of outdated mechanisms that were troublesome even when newly installed. The public would not know the difference unless told. Failure to implement such a program accounts for more ill will toward Amtrak than all other sources combined. They must not predicate their success on a fleet of new cars five years hence. Too much water will flow under the bridge in the interim.

Moreover, too much stress is being placed on speed and too much time is being spent talking about average speeds when references to present cruising and top speeds would leave a much better impression with the public. Speed, like new equipment, is all well and good, but is not an absolute requisite for filling trains with passengers. Comfort is!

The battle lines may be drawn at 55mph sometime in the future, but for the present they are drawn at 75 degrees Farenheit.

Dr. M. D. Monaghan
Dallas City-County Amtrak Committee
Garland, Texas

I can't say how much I enjoyed the article "Shakedown Cruise of the EL CAMINO" in your last issue. Previously I've encountered a "dining-car steward" reception from Amtrak customer service officials at LAUPT concerning the disposition of the EL CAMINO cars. However, I decided to phone Baxter Ward's office. I couldn't resist the opportunity to photograph these idle cars first. In the past Amtrak officials have considered the platform near these cars a restricted area, even going as far as not allowing any photographs unless I received approval from Mr. Ward! Ironically, Mr. Ward's office was quite receptive to my inquiry even tho I had to contend with the usual political runaround. They said the future of this run is in limbo pending the outcome of a court arbitration case next month. As if I didn't already know this, they suggested I contact a salvage firm in Cottage Grove, Oregon or the ICG to obtain the previous owners of the "San Fernando" car. That's bureaucracy at its height. All praise and glory to Mr. Bretz for his informative article.

Mike Dolenski
Norton Air Force Base, California

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CARTER NAMES NEW TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY

President-elect Jimmy Carter on Dec 14 announced his first two cabinet appointments, and one of them was the new Secretary of Transportation who will take over William Coleman's job late next month--Brock Adams, Democratic Congressman from Washington State. Adams is regarded by fellow Congressman as a respected, knowledgeable person who has been involved in transportation affairs for some time. Adams reportedly was interested in seeking the transportation office and felt he could contribute to the nation's welfare in that position. Adams is the first Transportation Secretary in recent years who comes from a background in that field.

Amtrak immediately praised Carter's selection as an "outstanding" one. Amtrak said that Adams had played a key role in the recent Northeast railroad crisis, and that he is well-qualified to help the nation solve its growing transportation problems. Adams reportedly sees a need for reorganizing and reforming the DOT, and Amtrak expressed pleasure at that fact. Said Amtrak in response to the news of Adams's appointment, "Times have changed and priorities must be restructured."

Adams has been quoted as saying that failures in transportation are largely responsible for the urbanization of America and the failure of small towns. Adams is expected to work toward revitalizing the railroad system, and reduction of government regulation is one method he is expected to use to achieve that end. Adams has been chairman of the House Budget Committee and a member of the Commerce Committee and its transportation subcommittee.

DERAILMENTS AND WRECKS MAR HOLIDAY SCENE

Southern Railway's only remaining regular passenger train, the SOUTHERN CRESCENT, derailed on its northbound run at 6:45am Dec 6 a short distance southeast of Culpeper VA while traveling at 75mph in a 79mph zone. A broken rail was said by a railroad spokesman to be the cause. The train was made up of 4 engines and 9 cars, and the last 7 cars derailed, with 3 sleepers and a coach tumbling down a 10-foot embankment and two of them (one identified as sleeper 2016 "St. Johns River") falling on their sides. Of the 134 passengers and 20 crew aboard, 20 were treated at hospitals and only 2 held there, in satisfactory condition. Uninjured passengers were bused to a Holiday Inn until arrangements for completing their trips could be made. In the adjoining photo (by Robin Gallaher, courtesy of Richmond VA Times-Dispatch) some of the derailed cars are shown, with the embankment at the far left.

Amtrak train 15, the southbound LONE STAR, at 9:10am Central Time on Dec 15 hit a gas tanker truck at Marland OK. The two engines and the first two cars, including a coach, were set afire. The driver of the truck and the engineer and fireman of the train were killed. There were no injuries among the approximately 70 passengers aboard.

Amtrak train 380, the northbound ILLINI, struck an auto north of Clifton IL on Dec 15, killing 3 occupants of the car. The auto was jammed under Amtrak engine 719 and the train was terminated, with the approximately 35 passengers aboard switched to train 58, the northbound PANAMA LIMITED.

Amtrak train 6, the eastbound SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, derailed at 3:15am on Dec 16

two miles west of Papillon NB, a suburb of Omaha. It was thought that a broken rail caused the accident, in which 46 of 166 passengers were treated at hospitals, with one in serious condition. The derailed train looked like this: engine 620 not derailed; derailed but upright: engine 586, baggage cars 1102 & 1080, bag-dorm 1573, coaches 5016, 4828, 4823 (tilted); fallen on side and uncoupled from lead cars: dome coach 9464, bar-lounge 3501, diner 8065 "Lake McDonald"; coupled but tilted: sleepers 2639 "Pacific Union" & 2722 "Pine Island." Most of the injured passengers were said to be in the dome coach, which was filled to capacity. Ambulances arrived about 20 minutes after the accident, and uninjured passengers were bused on to Chicago. Those who missed connections in Chicago were put up in Chicago hotels overnight. Amtrak President Paul Reistrup flew to the accident scene, arriving at 6am. This info from reader David Cromwell, who was a passenger in car 2722.

Rail Canada

A PRINTER'S ERROR in the first CN-CP Rail joint public timetable issued in late October erroneously lists CN's Montreal-Chicoutimi and Quebec City-Cochrane as CP Rail services. "Princess of Acadia" service across the Bay of Fundy is omitted. Where both railways run a parallel service, such as Montreal-Ottawa, two separate timetable blocks are printed, rather than a merged schedule section.

CANADIAN NATIONAL SUSPENDED operation of its ferry "Bluenose" between Portland ME and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia for the winter period ending Apr 29, 1977. Another ferry, the "Marine Cruiser," formerly the "Princess of Tasmania" from the Australia-Tasmania run, picked up the service on Nov 28 and will be chartered to CN as a replacement for the "Prince of Fundy" which left the run permanently for new service in Europe. Complaints by Canadian residents forced resumption of the service, according to reports. The route saves hundreds of miles of travel between New England and Nova Scotia points.

AN ALBERTA CHAPTER of the citizens group Transport 2000 held a founding meeting in that city early in December, and attracted 17 persons, plus TV coverage.

DEPUTY FEDERAL MINISTER of Transport Sylvain Cloutier told the Parliament transport committee early in December that MOT plans to give CP Rail exclusive rights to Montreal-Quebec City passenger train service. CP will also take over the Montreal-Ottawa service, now served mainly by CN. The move means the end of CN's "Rapido" runs between Montreal and Quebec, now two roundtrips daily. CN will retain exclusive rail service Montreal-Toronto and Toronto-Windsor. Tenders for 10 new high-speed trainsets are to be received in February, with delivery set for late 1979.

THROWING EXTRAVAGANT PARTIES your bag? If so, why not consider a "bigger-than-life" bash aboard the "Princess Marguerite"? The mini-ocean liner will be available for charter prior to opening of the regular Seattle-Victoria season May 20, and again after Oct 2, 1977. Info from the Manager, B.C.S.S.Co., 390 Belleville St., Victoria, B.C., Canada.

SKYLINE TRAVEL SERVICE of Vancouver is offering a Seattle tour package using Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, Amtrak announced this month. Individuals or groups can take 1- or 2-night trips, using the Mayflower Park Hotel in Seattle. Details from 563 Granville St., Vancouver, B.C. V6C 1X6.

THE LAURENTIAN HOTEL across from CP's Windsor Station in Montreal was closed Nov 30 for demolition. CP Limited will have a 22-story corporate headquarters at the site, along with other office buildings.

NORTHLAND NAVIGATION COMPANY passenger service between Vancouver, Prince Rupert, and Queen Charlotte Islands ended Oct 31 with withdrawals of federal subsidies.

CANADIAN RAIL SUPPORTERS are making these guesses about most probable changes in the offing: Possible cutback to alternate day service on transcon runs, but retention of both routes; federal subsidy increase from 80% to 100%.

SOUTH TO ALTA CALIFORNIA ON THE COAST STARLIGHT

by Glenn Lee

I consider myself very fortunate, in that I very much enjoy living where I do. From my modest residence on Seattle's Queen Anne Hill, I have a view of the bay; and am able to watch the ferries, tugs, fireboats and great cargo liners, and also the "Princess Marguerite" return each evening from Victoria during the summertime. I can hear, when the wind is right, the passage of Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL and NORTH COAST HIAWATHA trains.

Yet the day inevitably comes that I cannot stay; and I am as much summoned to travel as the migratory whales, or the great pelagic birds which circumnavigate the planet in the sub-polar regions. While they may take to fin or wing, I must take to the shining rails.

E (for Escape) Day dawned foggy in Seattle. I could tell before I left the bed, as the first sound of the day was that of the state ferry "Walla Walla" feeling its way to Seattle on the 5:45am trip from Winslow, its distinctive horn blasting once per minute. It was a cab ride to the Amtrak station, and then to work. A morning of troubleshooting followed, which was completed by 11:30am, at which time I walked from my downtown office to the depot. The sleeping car conductor received my ticket at 11:43am, and I was aboard the COAST STARLIGHT about 11:46am for the 11:50am departure into a foggy October noontide.

After a summer of continuous 17- or 18-car consists, today's STARLIGHT was somewhat shorter. Locomotives 557 and 558 led cars 1154, 1500, 4856, 4857, 4866, 4500, 4861, 4518, 3351, 8035, 2713 "Pine Cavern", and 2717 "Pine Fern." The train was not filled, altho the load increased thru the afternoon.

Shortly after departure, I was seated for lunch in the dining car, and noted a flat wheel bumping along below. My table-mate at lunch was a burly Canadian gentleman who had been attracted by the $109 bargain round-trip to San Diego. He had been amazed that the $109 round-trip also applied to Los Angeles, and was the same to both cities from Seattle also. "They've got a real $109 fixation," he said. He noted that stopovers were not allowed, and said that if the STARLIGHT failed to connect with the SAN DIEGAN the next evening, he would go to Los Angeles instead.

He had been unhappy at not being able to smoke in the dining car because of the new ICC regulations. He also suggested that the STARLIGHT cars were not nearly as nice as the new Amfleet stock on the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. As luncheon progressed, the diner almost completely filled with a very pleasant, easy-going crowd, and no one noticed the flat wheel much. As usual, the kitchen was placed rear, contrary to most railway practice, so that in the event of air conditioning failure, open vestibule doors would allow hot kitchen air and odor to exhaust rear.

I noted that two of the depot tracks had been removed at Tacoma, and also that we were falling behind schedule, running about 8 minutes late south of Tacoma, but only 3 minutes late by the time we reached East Olympia. The track seems somewhat bumpy north of Centralia, but improves somewhat south of that city, where reverse-signal CTC is in operation on the double-track main line.

The approximate 50-minute segment between Centralia and Kelso-Longview is a busy stretch of line when the COAST STARLIGHTS are due. A quick log of activities was as follows for my train: At milepost 77, 2:18pm, cross over from southbound to northbound main line for left-hand running; 2:21pm, pass several pieces of track equipment; 2:25pm, at MP 85, cross over to southbound line; 2:32pm, pass northbound STARLIGHT; 2:34pm, cross over to northbound main at Ostrander.

During this period, an obvious first-time rider, altho middle-aged, asked me with a sense of semi-urgency: "Where are the johns in this place?" I explained to him the location of the public toilet at the end of each sleeper, and that the roomette toilets were located under the purple settee. He thanked me and disappeared.

At 2:49pm we crossed over to the southbound main once again; and a few moments after leaving Kalama, I noted many Milwaukee Road boxcars which had been thrown from a low cliff into the Columbia River by a spectacular derailment earlier in the summer.

South of Kelso I noted more stretches of rough BN track, and also that my roomette was getting warm, now that the afternoon sun had burned away the fog. Arrival in Portland was 3:43pm, or 7 minutes early, and provided for a leisurely visit to the newsstand in the depot.

Departure from Portland was one minute late at 4:06pm, and after leaving the industrial area behind, we picked up speed for the approximate 70-minute run to Salem. It was difficult to avoid noticing that the SP track in this area also is becoming bumpy in places.

I spent much of the hour after Portland in my roomette, reading some San Francisco newspapers and enjoying the feeling of "getting away from it all" after a busy morning at work. The solitude gave me a chance to inspect the usefulness of my roomette, which at today's fare levels had not come cheap. The room was warming up as the sun moved to the west side of the train, and the lowering sun easily outlined a myriad of scratches on the exterior pane, enough to interfere with pleasant viewing. Also, as my window shade heated, the shade showed declining interest in remaining in a raised position, and as the roomette became hotter, became self-lowering. After several attempts I was able to wrap the fabric of the shade around the bar at the bottom and shove the entire assemply up high enough to jam the shade at the window top. It was either fully open or fully closed. No in-between. The fully open shade allowed for viewing the scenery, but also let in the hot rays of the lowering sun. I turned the overhead fan from "medium" to "high" only to hear a horrible racket from the complaining fan. Back to "medium" it went, as I gradually heated myself both physically and metaphorically. "No one would put up with this at the Hilton," I thought.

My porter seemed to be avoiding any or all conversation that pertained to the heat of the car; and feeling some sympathy for what he must have experienced from passengers during the warm summer months, I simply let the matter slide, knowing that a chilly evening was in store as we climbed the Cascades, once the sun had set.

At Woodburn I noted some ex-Pacific Electric passenger cars stored west of the tracks, and after leaving Albany I stood at the rear door of the train for a long time watching a southbound freight emerge from a siding to follow us toward Eugene. About 6:15pm the sun called it a day, just about the time we passed the BN bridge near Harrisburg that is noteworthy for the fact that the draw span, dating back to the days of inland navigation this far south in the Willamette Valley, is located above an island in the river, and not over running water.

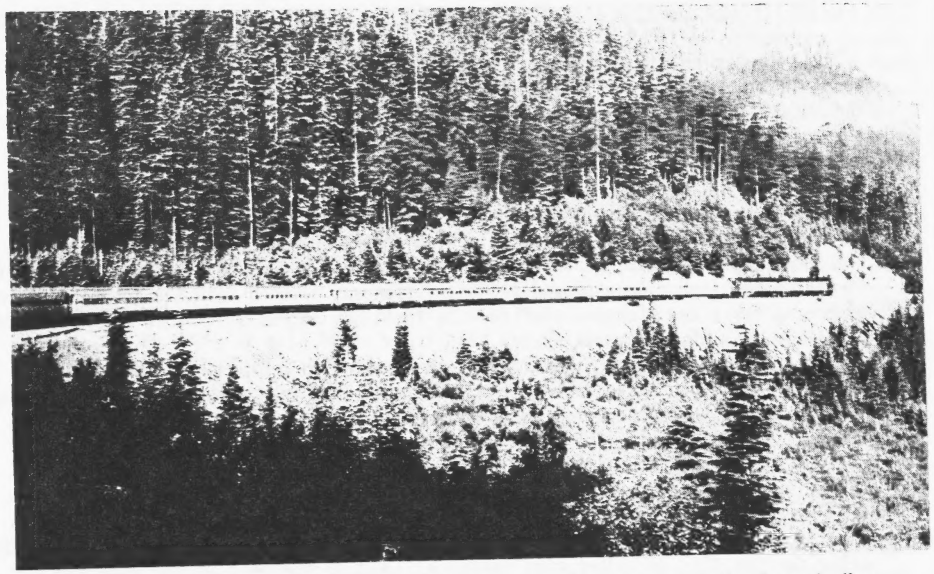
A very relaxed air had fallen over the train in the early twilight, as I walked thru the train to inspect the coach section. I found that coaches 4866 and 4861 were hot, and noted a flat wheel on coach 4500.

A late, long and relaxed dinner in the dining car left me with the impression that Amtrak is continuing to make improvements in this vital service. In contrast to previous STARLIGHT trips where crowd handling had been poor and service and attention from steward and crew alike had been "snippy," the entire dinner atmosphere, including the food, had been pleasant.

My table-mate at dinner was a Santa Barbara matron, making her first rail trip since 1943, when she had traveled north from Omaha on the Burlington to South Dakota in elderly rolling stock, heated by a coal stove at one end of the car. The contrast between 1943 and 1976 contributed substantially to her conversation, and she said she would probably be back to ride Amtrak again, altho she "loved flying."

By the time the train had reached Cascade Summit it seemed that aside from some activity in the lounge car, most passengers were either sleeping or very inactive.

* * *



The COAST STARLIGHT moves along the thickly-forested slopes of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. Vestibule photo by Mike Jarel.

At 5:50am the Sacramento Valley was black. Our train whirled thru the northern edges of Yolo County as romantically as anything in Edna St. Vincent Millay, and I took my time dressing, watching the live oak trees and extensive acreage of lush ranches slip by.

Once about, I found my car empty, and thus had no problem squatting in the car aisle across from the bedrooms, to look east. Floating along with us was the slim, silvery-yellow crescent of the old moon, riding low above the crest of the Sierra; and uneasily above the advancing yellow strata of the advancing dawn.

The hypnotic combination of train, track, countryside and astronomical beauty made me reluctant to prepare to leave; but within a few minutes we slowed at the outskirts of Davis, and rolled to a smooth and slow stop at 6:32am, some 8 minutes early.

A loyal friend was on the platform to say hello and to carry a suitcase. We chatted until the 6:45am departure time. After watching the last cars round the curve and disappear en route to Oakland, we could only agree that it was indeed wonderful that this train is still running. Almost as much of a pleasure in knowing that, as spending a day in Davis among old friends and old haunts.

AMTRAK OFFERS 4449 STEAM EXCURSION

Upon completion of the American Freedom Train's tour behind ex-SP steam engine 4449 at Miami FL, Amtrak plans to move the renowned engine to Birmingham for the winter, and will offer a 3-day excursion with an 18-car consist for railfans. The tentative schedule calls for a run from Miami to Sanford FL on Jan 14, 1977, a move from Sanford to Thomasville GA on Jan 15, and from Thomasville to Birmingham AL on Jan 16, where the engine will be wintered over in Southern Railway's shops. Special reserved seat tickets will be required for the run. The excursion will be listed in Amtrak's reservations computer by the time this issue is published, and riders wishing to make the trip should contact their train-specialist travel agent or an Amtrak reservations office directly. SCL and L&N tracks will carry the train.

GROUND BROKEN FOR TRAIN-BUS-BART STATION

Until May 1, 1971 SP passenger trains running out of Oakland CA stopped at Richmond--in the last few pre-Amtrak years taking on and discharging patrons at a rutted vacant lot, the site of the SP station which the railroad had torn down to--in the belief of some railfans--discourage further rail patronage. When Amtrak took over, the Richmond stop was discontinued altogether. Following this nadir point, things began to improve.

The BART system was completed and service on the Richmond line began on Jan 29, 1973. Soon a lengthy and involved planning and coordinating process began among transportation agencies, lawmakers and planners, and now on Dec 16, 1976 an historic turning point in Bay Area ground transportation was reached with the formal breaking of ground for a new Richmond station--the first new Amtrak station in the nation to be linked to a rapid transit system.

The concept of integrated multi-modal transportation centers has been long and agonizingly slow in being implemented, and patrons of the professional carriers can thank California State Senator James Mills, along with other forward-looking individuals, for this new contribution to American ease of physical mobility, not to mention social and economic growth of the areas it serves.

A bright and dry December 16 saw a shiny 4-car Amfleet SAN JOAQUIN make its routine stop by the Richmond BART station to pick up its Santa Fe crew. The time was shortly after 9:30am, and a cluster of officials and media people were already gathering for the 10am groundbreaking ceremony. Just to the west of the SP tracks, across from the northern end of the BART platform, a small heap of dirt and three ribboned shovels had been placed in a vacant parcel of land. Spectators gathered in a semi-circle about the multi-modal station site, and the Richmond Union High School Marching Band warmed up. A row of three shiny buses--from Greyhound, Continental Trailways and AC Transit, all carriers that will be represented in the new depot area--stood behind the band. More and more TV cameramen appeared on the scene.

At ten o'clock the speech-making began, and dignitaries were introduced. Amtrak people Neal Owen (VP-Western Region) and Arthur Lloyd (Public Affairs, Western) were on hand. CalTrans director Adriana Gianturco was represented by Tom Lammers, CalTrans District Director. CalTrans and the state have a large hand in this project, since all but the $50,000 provided by Amtrak is state money made available by legislation sponsored by Senator Mills and Senator Alfred Alquist of Santa Clara County. Congressman George Miller, Assemblyman Jack Knox subbing for James Mills, officials of BART, AC Transit, the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor Nat Bates of Richmond all were introduced. AC Transit's Alan Bingham called it an "historic occasion." Sen. Mills was presented with a plaque, which Jack Knox accepted for him. Said Knox, in praise of Mills, "As a politician, I wish I were bright and resourceful enough to have thought of this myself." Several speakers told of "incredible" paperwork, bureaucracy and red tape that had to be waded thru to bring this idea to fruition. Congressman Miller said that when the project began two years ago he "thought it wouldn't happen." But he was glad it did, because for one thing it would held "get the elderly back into circulation," and all those without access to automobiles.

The speeches finished ahead of schedule, and the band played until 10:33, when the eastbound SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR by pre-arrangement slowed to a stop at the scene. At the same time, an 8-car BART train was spotted on the eastbound BART track to the rear of the TV cameramen's scene. This was clearly the most dramatic point of the morning--since the SFZ was the largest and loudest vehicle in sight--and the train produced horn blasts and visual effects for the TV crews, while Amtrak officials gave statements to the media. The 13-car train 6 was comprised of engines 627 and 623 and cars 1198, 1422, 1402, 4815, 4827, 4814, 7506, 7520, 3330, 8074, 2733, 2651 and 2252--a 3-sleeper consist out of Oakland. After a 3-minute pause the train resumed its journey to Chicago. Starting hopefully next July the train, and all five other Oakland-based runs, will stop at the new facility to allow passengers to make easy transfers to BART, the bus lines, or to privately-operated bus service to Marin County.

Contracts for building the new Amtrak facility have been let, and the $600,000 project will be shortly underway. Plans for the future call for additional short-distance train runs between Oakland and Sacramento, using the new station. One reason for the choice of Richmond for this facility was the fact that all Oakland-based trains can use it. Also, at this spot the BART line adjoins the SP main, and adequate parking space is available. The city of Richmond expects much more land development in this area. Already a new social security building housing over 2000 workers stands nearby. A bank and medical center and other commercial structures are expected to arise, and a plaza with fountain will set off the area.

The Amtrak facility will be built astride the SP main line with an overhead stairway connecting the BART platform and eastbound Amtrak tracks. An elevator or escalator will bring patrons to the lower BART station area and parking lot.

A PLAN TO CHANGE EAST-MIDWEST SERVICE

Amtrak's Marketing Department is circulating among Amtrak people a proposal for modified East-Midwest service thru Pittsburgh, tentatively to take effect with the upcoming spring schedule change next Apr 25. The proposal would see a new Amfleet run created from Pittsburgh to New York, along with a new train running from New York to Chicago. In addition, the BROADWAY LIMITED and NATIONAL LIMITED would be combined westbound from NY to Pittsburgh, and eastbound the NATIONAL would be combined with the new train at Pittsburgh. The Washington DC section of the BROADWAY would run between Pittsburgh and Washington via B&O.

While this is still at the proposal stage, and may have flaws, it is notable that for the first time under Amtrak Cincinnati would have direct service to New York, and Kansas City, St. Louis and Indianapolis would be conveniently linked to Washington, Norfolk and Cincinnati, as well as to New York.

Amtrak is also reported to be seriously considering a second Cleveland-Chicago train which would run by next summer. Elyria OH would be a manned station, Sandusky OH would become a passenger stop, and rumor has it that Amtrak is interested in a stop somewhere between Cleveland OH and Erie PA, probably Painesville or Ashtabula.

PROPOSED SCHEDULES

Local Amfleet	BROADWAY LIMITED	JAMES W. RILEY	NATIONAL LIMITED	BROADWAY LIMITED	New Train		BROADWAY LIMITED	BROADWAY (Wash. sec.)	New Train	NATIONAL LIMITED	JAMES W. RILEY	Local Amfleet
8:45a	4:55p	5:20p	5:05p		10:30p	LV New York	9:30a	8:45a		2:00p	1:20p	6:15p
↓	↓				↓	LV Washington	↑	-		↑	↑	↑
5:20p	1:25a		1:15a		7:00a	Cumberland	12:45a	12:50a		5:00a		9:30a
			1:55a	1:55a	7:15a	AR Pittsburgh LV	12:15a	→	4:35a	4:30a		
		↓	↓	3:30a	9:15a	LV Pittsburgh AR	10:15p		2:35a	↑		
			6:25a	9:30a	3:15p	Canton	3:00p		6:30p	12:00m		
		7:15a	9:40a			AR Chicago				8:45p	11:32p	
			12:40p			Columbus				6:45p		
			5:00p			Cincinnati				12:45p		
			10:45p			Indianapolis				6:45a		
						St. Louis						
						Kansas City						

THE INLAND ROUTE - A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD IDEA

by Peter Roehm

In Springfield MA on Oct 18 a meeting attended by some 40 persons was held, with representatives from nine Connecticut and Massachusetts communities plus state representatives and members of the Northeast Transportation Coalition, the driving force behind returning the Inland Route to full status, to revive thru passenger service between Boston/New Haven and points south via the populated corridor of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Middletown, known as the Inland Route.

The idea is old and had been attempted in Amtrak's early stages, but died from lack of any real support over its frustrating 4-year existence. It has now moved from the back burner where it has long been simmering to the front burner where the fire has been lit in another strong effort to tap the continually growing population heartland of the southern New England tier and, as well, provide an integral component in future service extensions to Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and the Maritimes via either the present Connecticut River routing for the first two states and the old State of Maine routing for the latter.

Jim Ullman, long time shaker in the Inland Route restoration drive, emphasized that the NETC effort with the Inland Route is not designated to take away from the Shore Line but to equalize it in the two-pronged portion of the Northeast Corridor north and east of New Haven in the manner that the Interstate Highway did, with I-95 paralleling the Shore Line and I-91/86/90 roughly matching the Inland Route.

Sam Stokes, of the NHARP, stressed the importance of the Inland Route as the only gateway to New Hampshire and Vermont and NETC activist Bill Ensign of Westfield MA urged the importance of the Maine connection via either the old State of Maine line thru Worcester and Ayer or via a ConRail (NYNH&H-B&A) run to a B&M connection just west of Boston at Grand Junction, thence backing into North Station (B&M), thence north to Portland and beyond. The latter move would also serve to activate the return of Boston-Portland trains that has long been discussed but never pursued with any great vigor.

The Inland Route did have thru service from May 17, 1971 until terminated on Feb 18, 1975 under a 403-B section of the Rail Passenger Act of 1970. Early ridership was promising, but a decline not long afterward aborted all hopes as schedules were altered to compete with the Shore Line Turbos (the Inland train left with 15 mins of the Turbo) along with other unannounced schedule changes from time to time. Later in the almost-4-year experiment the thru service was cut back to New Haven, thus accelerating the patronage drop; too, fares were generally not competitive with the faster bus operation, and the on-time performance suffered not unexpectedly. There was no Amtrak promotion (altho required under the Act) and the equipment of worn-out Budd cars and Budd-style trainsets along with unreliable connections in New Haven did what the rest could not. Thus it died in fact but not in hope.

With the coming of the Dukakis administration in 1975 the new governor and his Secretary of Transportation, Fred Salvucci, made it clear that any new service on the Inland Route must be more than one train per day and more like 3 to 5, with thru cars to points south of New York plus all of the obvious requirements necessary to get a service functioning properly so that it would receive political and patron support. Amtrak's Paul Reistrup concurred with Dukakis and Salvucci and it was then hoped that the yet-to-arrive LAKE SHORE LIMITED would bring the Inland Route back soon after. It did not. To now use the Inland Route for a trip from Boston to New York requires two changes (Springfield and New Haven) and 5 hrs 50 mins of time; northbound takes 6 hrs 20 mins with the same two changes.

In a study prepared in mid-1975 by the Worcester (MA) Area Chamber of Commerce and still valid it was pointed out that the Inland Route qualified as a primary rail passenger corridor for a number of reasons, including:

1) The population of the Inland Route (including Hartford, Springfield, Worcester, and Framingham) exceeded that of the Shore Line (New London and Providence) by at least 1.2 million;

2) The effective buying income of this population base exceeded that of the Shore Line by $5.5 billion;

3) The volume of traffic (90% by auto) between Hartford/Springfield and Boston is over 80% of the volume between Boston and New York;

4) The Inland Route is but 3 miles longer than the Shore Line and serves 6 identifiable market areas including Connecticut's capital and that line of Massachusetts' population west from Boston to Worcester where the Commonwealth's center of population is centered;

5) The Inland Route serves as the gateway to northern New England with Worcester as the principal connection point to the Maine/Maritimes region and Springfield to the mountain and ski country of the north.

Until recently, several groups had argued against the viability of the Inland Route. The Penn Central had long insisted to the DOT, USRA, Amtrak, etc., that no passenger trains should operate at all on the Inland Route. The credibility of this argument became dubious once the LAKE SHORE LIMITED began. Too, Senators Pell and Pastore of Rhode Island lobbied hard to make sure that the Northeast Corridor had but one prong and that was thru Providence; others argued that the existence of the Massachusetts Turnpike and its interstate connections west and south invalidated any need for rail passenger service in the corridor, yet these opponents forgot the similar parallel service with the New York Thruway and the Connecticut Turnpike. Currently the Massachusetts DOT members appear to be the stumbling block, as they had been with the MBTA/B&M purchase (see RTN, 1st Nov issue), according to Massachusetts representatives at the meeting.

Yet the presently dormant state of the Inland Route has not kept Messrs Ullman, Ensign and Stokes, along with others, from continuing the fight to put the line back on the Amtrak map. The Oct 18 meeting was the first, and another is scheduled for Mar 1977, to follow up and update the effort to that point. Funding of $15 million was passed a year ago and yet the Massachusetts DOT has done nothing with plans for its use. Political pressure is now being urged all along the route to get the trains running again.

Thus James Ullman was elected to head the effort, as he has done for so long now, and a resolution was drawn up by the Mayors of the Inland Route communities pledging a cooperative and coordinated effort to implement the Inland Route objective. That is the first step--to restore the Boston-Springfield/Hartford-New York service; then will come Step Two with efforts to tap the northern states. But until Step One happens, Step Two will not. Rumor continues to circulate of attempts to put the NIGHT OWL on the Inland Route to better tap the business and college (Wellesley, Holy Cross, U of Mass, Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke, Springfield) potential that would use a night train. This could very well be the first solid reality of the Inland Route; but meanwhile the team is back in the game and running hard for the goal.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Secretary Coleman has impeded Amtrak's progress, has sought to restrict its service drastically instead of trying to help make it more efficient, has talked negatively about the service at every opportunity (misusing statistics and ignoring future energy shortage considerations), and now is attempting to impose his short-sighted views on the incoming Secretary of Transportation. We hope he will be ineffectual in this, too."

--Orren Beaty, president of NARP, in letter to New York Times, Dec 12.

Amtrak 1977

Basic black GG-1 in Philadelphia

Rebuilding at Bechgrove

Amtrak tri-color on Metroliner

Brother act in New Haven

Handsome E's in Chicago

sdp40s with a cowlick in Green River, Wyo.

Zebras in New England

The first five years at Amtrak have showed more changes in the railroad passenger scene than the entire previous two decades, and more revamping is due in 1977. Catch these initial years of Amtrak in Rail Transportation Archives' new weekly calendar profusely illustrating everything in the Amtrak scene from RDC's in New Haven to Amclubs in San Diego. And also some surprises: U-boats on the S.F. Zepher; rebuilding in Beechgrove; oldest equals newest equipment!

Over fifty pages of photography and information, all on Amtrak — the trains, the stations, the equipment and the routes — plus calendar note space to log the Amtrak events sure to happen throughout 1977. Mailed direct from the publisher, or see your local hobby shop. Softbound. $6.95 + 51 postage and handling.

Rail Transportation Archives
P.O. Box 1970
San Francisco, Ca. 94101

Rate the Trains

ANNOUNCING RTN'S FOURTH READER RATING SURVEY

On the reverse of this page, we are providing a form for submitting reader train ratings, for your convenience. It is not necessary to use the form to submit your ratings. Rating instructions are given below.

Readers are invited to submit their ratings and comments on North American regularly scheduled passenger trains (not commuter) ridden between July 1 and December 31, 1976. Results will be published in RTN as soon as possible after the Dec 31 cutoff date. Note that our new rating form asks for comments to be placed on a separate sheet. This is because the small space we could provide on the form tended to inhibit the submitting of comments.

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate as many trains as you wish, but rate only those you have personally ridden during the period ending Dec 31. Rate each train on each of the 11 categories (A-K) listed below:

A. Overall quality of service, taking everything into account.
B. Service from on-board train personnel, except food service personnel.
C. Service from dining, snack or lounge crew.
D. Quality of food offered aboard the train.
E. Condition of cars used (cleanliness, repair, etc.).
F. Desirability of the particular toute it follows.
G. Quality of station services along the route.
H. Condition of the track and roadbed along the route.
I. Desirability of present scheduling of the train.
J. Train promotion--how well is it advertised or promoted?
K. Desirability of type of cars used on the train.

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9
very poor — average, acceptable — very good

Use a 9-point scale (as shown above) for your ratings, with 1 = extremely poor, 9 = extremely good, and 5 (scale mid-point) = average, acceptable. You need not make a rating on each of the above 11 items, but list all 11 letters (A-K), unless you use the form which already lists them, for each train, and place your rating number beside each letter, leaving blank any categories you can't rate. Place your number rating, from 1-9, beside each category letter.

Please submit your ratings on a piece of paper or card separate from any other business or editorial correspondence (not necessarily in a separate envelope). Add whatever comments you wish after your ratings. Include your name and address and indicate whether we can use your name if we publish your comments. Unless you indicate otherwise, we will assume we can use your name.

People occasionally ask what should be their basis for judgments--the ideal train, the best train under present circumstances, etc. Our answer is: use your own judgment. That way the results will reflect rider satisfaction based on riders' own internal criteria. This gives the most useful information, since riders' personal satisfaction is what determines train patronage.

We are accepting ratings of Auto-Train and Canadian trains, along with Amtrak and non-Amtrak American passenger trains.

SEND YOUR RATINGS TO: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

Thank you!

RTN'S TRAIN RATING FORM

NAME & ADDRESS:

.....

.....

.....

Can we use your name? _____

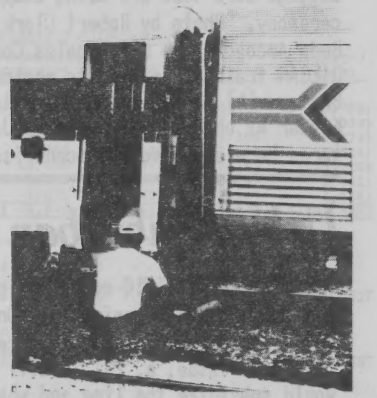
TRAIN NAME & NUMBER	DATE RIDDEN	A Overall	B Non-food Crew	C Food Crew	D Food Quality	E Car Condition	F Routing	G Stations	H Track	I Scheduling	J Promotion	K Type of Cars	COMMENT SYMBOL*
													1
													2
													3
													4
													5
													6
													7
													8
													9
													10
													11
													12
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	

*COMMENTS: to add comments, copy circled number on separate sheet, write train name after it, followed by your comments.

See reverse of form for full instructions.

PHOTO GALLERY

Captions on next page



RTN'S TRAIN RATING FORM

NAME & ADDRESS:

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Can we use your name? _____

TRAIN NAME & NUMBER	DATE RIDDEN	A Overall	B Non-food Crew	C Food Crew	D Food Quality	E Car Condition	F Routing	G Stations	H Track	I Scheduling	J Promotion	K Type of Cars	COMMENT SYMBOL*
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													12
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	

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PHOTO GALLERY

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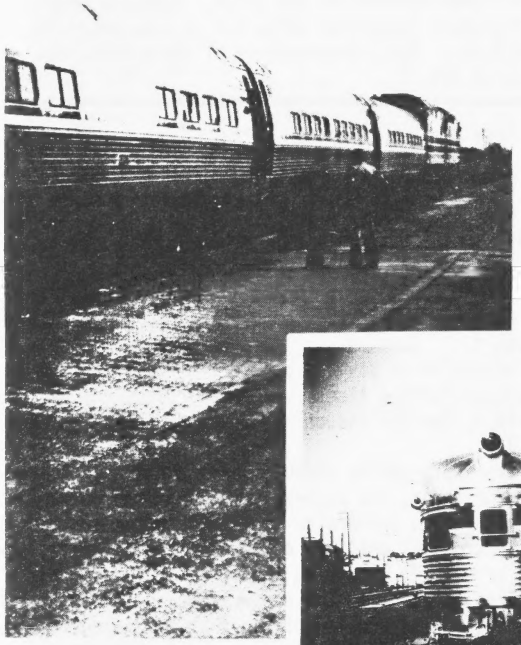

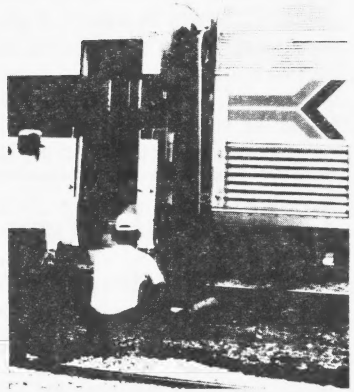

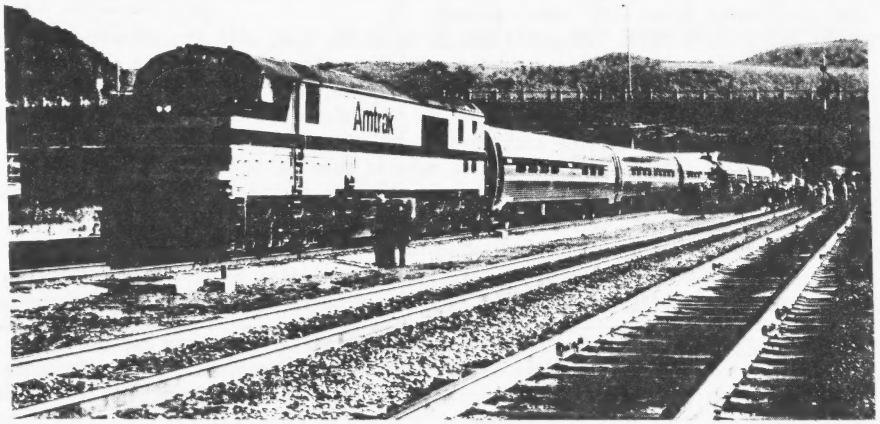

Photo captions for preceding page: Clockwise from upper left--(1) New train to Yosemite. The inaugural Amfleet SAN JOAQUIN prepares to leave Merced CA for the first time, Oct 18. Merced is the transfer point for Yosemite buses for southbound travelers. Photo by Message Media. (2) The first joining of Auto-Train and the Amtrak FLORIDIAN, at Sanford FL on Oct 31. A-T kitchen dorm 597 and Amtrak baggage-dorm 1520 are being coupled for the first time, following a christening ceremony. Photo by Robert Clark. (3) Comparison of Budd dome observation and new Budd Amcoach: the Los Angeles County EL CAMINO on its Nov 17 shakedown run and SAN DIEGAN train 772 minus its engine sit side-by-side in San Diego. Photo by Peter Bretz. (4) The SHENANDOAH on its inaugural press run halts for an open house in Keyser WV on Oct 29. Photo by Jack Ferry. Full descriptions of the events pictured here appeared in recent issues of RTN.

Urban-Suburban Transit

THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC commute line will remain the backbone of public transit on the San Francisco peninsula. On Dec 15 the Metropolitan Transportation Commission voted almost unanimously to accept the PENTAP plan for upgrading the rail service (see last issue, p. 21). Still to be decided, in Jan or Feb, are what institution would subsidize the line and what funding plan to settle on. The MTC's resolution goes to the state legislature on Jan 1.

BOSTON & MAINE got new commuter schedules on Nov 28, and for the most part they show from 2-4 minutes cut from previous running times, with some reductions as much as 6 minutes (for timetable collectors, the new issues are Supplement 10 of Timetable 21; there was no Supplement 9).

OHIO RTN READERS are urged to write their public officials to take action to salvage the Cleveland-Youngstown commuter train, now posted for termination Jan 14.

A MISTAKE TALKING to the press, believes a University of California professor who wrote a report recently that was construed as critical of BART. "They almost gleefully reported the thingsthat went wrong with BART," he told the Daily Californian late in November. "It was not written about BART. It was written about Miami. It was written about Detroit and Atlanta. These are the cities that are going to benefit from the BART experience", said Prof. Melvin Webber.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC DEATHS were just as numerous in September as in Sept 1975, and in October they rose 5% above the 1975 month. DOT Transportation Secretary expressed dismay at the increase, but he didn't suggest anything to do about it except obey the 55mph speed limit, wear seat belts and "guard against alcohol abuse." The October figure of 4127 was still 19% lower than Oct 1973, before the energy crisis and the lowered speed limit which ensued.

CHICAGO'S SOUTH SHORE line continues to be in the news with its efforts either to end its commuter runs or obtain public subsidies. The ICC is to hold public hearings on the road's request for discontinuance soon.

COMMITTEE FOR BETTER TRANSIT in New York complained late in November that the MTA is getting set to cut service back further to save money. The agency has not yet named the exact cuts it will attempt to make to save $42 million per year.

FERRIES COMING BACK: Golden Gate Transit put into service Dec 13 a new ferry between San Francisco and Larkspur in Marin County. The ferry "Marin" cost $4.2 million and was delivered long behind schedule from its builder.

SAN FRANCISCO MUNI Railway was criticized by a Canadian transit consulting firm this month for "ineffective management" and "extremely poor" maintenance operations.

THE POSTAL SERVICE will ask for an increase of three to four cents per ounce for first class mail in 1977, to take effect next fall. If approved, this outrageous plan would mean an increase of at least one dollar in the yearly subscription rate

NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION
FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL AND OPERATING PLAN
ROUTE BY ROUTE PROFIT AND LOSS
FY1976 ($ 000's)

		OPERATING EXPENSES				
	REVENUES	DIRECT EXPENSES	COMMON EXPENSES	GENERAL SUPPORT	TOTAL EXPENSES	PROFIT/ (LOSS)
Northeast Corridor						
Metroliner	$ 40,053	$ 20,308	$ 23,810	$ 9,724	$ 53,842	$(13,789)
Conventional Corridor	10,935	11,268	9,196	4,510	24,974	(14,039)
Boston-Washington	27,582	26,665	19,513	10,178	56,356	(28,774)
New Haven-Springfield	684	750	1,065	400	2,215	(1,531)
NYC-Philadelphia	8,073	12,347	10,096	4,946	27,389	(19,316)
Harrisburg-Philadelphia	2,196	2,328	1,898	931	5,157	(2,961)
NYC-Harrisburg	812	846	1,071	423	2,340	(1,528)
Total NEC	$ 90,335	$ 74,512	$ 66,649	$ 31,112	$172,273	$(81,938)
Traversing Northeast Corridor						
Washington-Montreal						
Within NEC		$ 2,759	$ 2,201	$ -	$ 4,960	
Outside NEC		4,241	3,827	2,872	10,940	
Total	$ 4,878	$ 7,000	$ 6,028	$ 2,872	$ 15,900	$(11,022)
NYC-Florida						
Within NEC		$ 6,772	$ 7,088	$ -	$ 13,860	
Outside NEC		20,895	23,294	12,793	56,982	
Total	$ 34,437	$ 27,667	$ 30,382	$ 12,793	$ 70,842	$(36,405)
Chicago-NYC/Washington						
Within NEC		$ 3,002	$ 2,200	$ -	$ 5,202	
Outside NEC		7,452	6,732	4,272	18,456	
Total	$ 10,031	$ 10,454	$ 8,932	4,272	$ 23,658	$(13,627)
Kansas City-NYC/Washington						
Within NEC		$ 898	$ 680	$ -	$ 1,578	
Outside NEC		6,362	5,909	3,052	15,323	
Total	$ 5,437	$ 7,260	$ 6,589	$ 3,052	$ 16,901	$(11,464)
June Service Start-Ups						
Within NEC		$ 85	$ 63	$ -	$ 148	
Outside NEC		150	110	111	371	
Total	$ 332	$ 235	$ 173	$ 111	$ 519	$(187)
Subtotals						
Within NEC		$ 13,516	$ 12,232	$ -	$ 25,748	
Outside NEC		39,100	39,872	23,100	102,072	
Total Traversing NEC	$ 55,115	$ 52,616	$ 52,104	$ 23,100	$127,820	$(72,705)
Short Haul						
Empire Service	$ 6,402	$ 9,155	$ 5,877	$ 3,313	$ 18,345	$(11,943)
Chicago-St. Louis	3,231	3,359	5,029	1,850	10,238	(7,007)
Chicago-Milwaukee	1,253	1,064	3,371	978	5,413	(4,160)
Chicago-Detroit	3,799	5,169	5,856	2,430	13,455	(9,656)
Chicago-Carbondale	1,411	1,806	2,068	854	4,728	(3,317)
Chicago-Quincy	839	1,315	629	428	2,372	(1,533)
Los Angeles-San Diego	1,834	2,541	2,651	1,144	6,336	(4,502)
Seattle-Portland	858	2,577	2,305	1,076	5,958	(5,100)
Vancouver-Seattle	239	1,138	1,155	506	2,799	(2,560)
Washington-Cumberland	388	953	1,225	480	2,658	(2,270)
San Francisco-Bakersfield	553	2,367	2,228	1,013	5,608	(5,055)
NYC-Montreal	1,270	2,834	952	834	4,620	(3,350)
Chicago-Port Huron	904	2,231	1,329	784	4,344	(3,440)
Chicago-Dubuque	271	635	608	274	1,517	(1,246)
Minneapolis-Superior	341	695	542	273	1,510	(1,169)
Los Angeles-Las Vegas	28	62	17	18	97	(69)
Special Trains	388	189	123	76	388	(0)
Total Short Haul	$ 24,009	$ 38,090	$ 35,965	$ 16,331	$ 90,386	$(66,377)
Long Haul						
Chicago-Washington/Norfolk	$ 3,435	$ 8,625	$ 5,397	$ 3,091	$ 17,113	$(13,678)
Chicago-Seattle (North)	11,875	16,483	10,959	6,048	33,490	(21,615)
Chicago-Seattle (South)	5,714	10,389	8,688	4,205	23,282	(17,568)
Chicago-San Francisco	12,444	16,883	10,995	6,144	34,022	(21,578)
Chicago-Los Angeles	16,508	23,654	6,430	6,630	36,714	(20,206)
Chicago-Houston	6,711	7,761	5,659	2,958	16,378	(9,667)
Chicago-New Orleans	5,122	3,968	4,441	1,853	10,262	(5,140)
Chicago-Florida	6,208	12,430	8,187	4,544	25,161	(18,953)
St. Louis-Laredo	1,137	2,822	2,175	1,101	6,098	(4,961)
New Orleans-Los Angeles	4,901	4,599	3,573	1,801	9,973	(5,072)
Seattle-Los Angeles	10,788	10,074	7,042	3,772	20,888	(10,100)
Chicago-NYC/Boston	4,293	4,429	1,363	1,268	7,060	(2,767)
Total Long Haul	$ 89,136	$122,117	$ 74,909	$ 43,415	$240,441	$(151,305)
Other Revenues	$ 9,443					$ 9,443
Operating Totals	$268,038	$287,335	$229,627	$113,958	$630,920	$(362,882)
Corporate Expenses					$ 43,387	$(43,387)
Grand Total	$268,038				$674,307	$(406,269)

Mixed Train of Thoughts

A NEW STATION will be built in Rochester NY, Amtrak's Board of Directors decided Dec 15. A temporary station will be erected while the new permanent structure is being built, scheduled for completion by early 1978. The total project will cost over $2 million..... AMTRAK'S OCTOBER RIDERSHIP showed continued gains over 1975: overall ridership was up 12%, with first class up a whopping 24% and coach class 11%. Amtrak boarded 1,547,463 people this October, compared to 1,385,700 in October 1975. Massive ridership increases were shown on Western corridor routes on which Amfleet equipment has been introduced: 95% up L.A.-San Diego, 95% up Seattle-Vancouver, 75% up Seattle-Portland. On-time performance for Oct was 74.5% overall, a decrease from Sept. Complete figures should be available by next issue.....

* * *

"THE PEANUT SPECIAL" is the name chosen by the residents of Plains GA and surrounding areas for the Amtrak train that will take them to Washington for Jimmy Carter's inaugural on Jan 20. Plans for the train are still being finalized..... AMTRAK'S PAUL REISTRUP gave an interesting interview to Metropolitan magazine (Nov-Dec), a transit trade journal. One notable quote: "There is one massive psychological problem (to be overcome so transportation modes can work together) and it is a very practical problem as well. The average passenger cannot get from here to there conveniently, comfortably and for a reasonable price today except in the automobile. The whole system is tilted in favor of the automobile whether the passenger has to run down to the store or whether he has to go to Chicago. Changing that today would be like changing his method of breathing"..... FIVE YEAR PLAN of Amtrak's recently presented to Congress and the Administration contains much information. Our copy finally arrived after the first was lost in the mail, but too late to present much material from it in this issue. We are, however, printing Amtrak's Fiscal Year 1976 route-by-route profit and loss table (see p. 17). We will give here a few more or less random points from the report: The most-asked questions in our mailbag these days are What will Amtrak do for the Eastern trains that aren't getting bi-level equipment, and Why does Amtrak want to scrap so much conventional equipment--especially dome equipment--that is so well-liked by railfans? The report tells us that the non-bi-level long distance Eastern trains will first get the best of conventional equipment released from Western trains that go bi-level starting late next year. After that, new low-level equipment will be ordered for them. This equipment will total 365 cars planned to be purchased in Fiscal Years 1978-1981, with first delivery in summer 1979. These will not be Amfleet cars, tho they will be compatible with Amfleet equipment. Amtrak states specifically that a "major change" from its last 5-year plan is the decision not to order "Amsleepers" but to use Amfleet cars only on daylight short- and intermediate-distance runs (the coming Seattle to Salt Lake run is an exception that will carry Amfleet cars at the request of the states involved, in the interests of an early startup date). When the last of the 492 Amfleet cars is delivered soon, it will likely be the last of that design to be built for Amtrak. Some Amtrak people will off the record admit the deficiencies of Amfleet cars, especially the small windows, and it appears reasonable that the next generation of low-level long-distance cars will be designed with more passenger-pleasing features in place of airline-style characteristics that bear no relationship to rail travel. The Amtrak report gives no clues as to the actual design of these cars, and likely this has not been decided yet. Besides the 284 bi-level cars now on order, Amtrak wants to order 153 more in Fiscal Years 1978 and 1979 to equip the LONE STAR, INTER-AMERICAN, PANAMA LIMITED and FLORIDIAN. But Amtrak left open the possibility of ordering new low-level cars for these trains instead.....

THE SECOND QUESTION, the disposition of current conventional cars, remains vague in Amtrak's 5-year plan, except mainly for numbers involved. As of last Sept 30 Amtrak had 2059 locomotive-hauled cars in service, and 83% were conventional steam-heated cars. Amtrak expects the number of these conventional cars to decline to 296 by the end of Fiscal Year 1981. By 1982, 242 will remain, and they will be used on 403-B routes and for reserve needs and holiday peak periods. There are no specifics as to the types of cars to be kept, except that the ex-Santa Fe hi-level cars, probably modified to electric power, will be among them. They will be running on the LONE STAR, INTER-AMERICAN and PANAMA LIMITED until new equipment is received for those trains, at which time the hi-levels will go into the reserve equipment pool. From other sources we are told that the question of which cars to retire is one of confusion and perhaps some controversy at L'Enfant Plaza: "Some series of cars that are retired by one faction at Amtrak are un-retired when another faction gets word of the move, the big problem being that no one in charge seems fully familiar with the equipment in question." Amtrak's 5-year plan adds that 202 pre-1970 baggage cars will be kept and converted to head-end power.....

* * *

AMTRAK PLANS TO reschedule the COLONIAL next Feb 15, according to media reports from Virginia. The Amtrak Passenger Service Committee on Dec 2 reportedly approved a new scheduling which aims to give Richmond VA early morning service to Washington, with thru train service to Boston. Daily except Saturday the COLONIAL would leave Boston at 7:45am, reaching Washington at 5:30pm and Richmond at 7:30pm. Daily except Sunday it would leave Richmond at 8:35am, arriving Washington at 10:40am and Boston at 7:57pm. The PALMETTO will continue to operate to provide late afternoon departures for Washington. On Sundays the northbound COLONIAL would leave Richmond at 1:40pm, reaching Washington at 3:50pm and Boston at 12:37am. On Saturdays the southbound train would leave Washington at 8:45am (originating there), reaching Richmond at 11:05am and Williamsburg at 12:35pm. The train competes with the auto on Interstate 95 between Richmond and Washington, a highway described by Paul Reistrup as "one of the worst drives I've ever taken"..... A FURTHER REPORT on that crash and fire on the LONE STAR (see p. 3) reveals that 400 sacks of mail heading for Dallas and Oklahoma City were destroyed in the blaze..... STATE OF ALASKA voted Nov 2 to move its capital to a new city to be built on 100 square miles of land near Willow, 70 miles north of Anchorage, and close to the Alaska Railroad.....

* * *

A SITUATION OF confusion and uncertainty is arising again on the world petroleum scene. OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, has been meeting in mid-December to consider price increases for petroleum, and in an unexpected move Saudi Arabia split with the group and decided to increase production and not raise prices, in view of recessionary conditions throughout the world. Most of the other nations voted for an increase of 15% spread out over 1977. The likely effect here is an increase in gasoline pump prices, but higher profits for oil companies who have been storing excess oil. One can expect that situations like this will become more frequent and more devastating as oil production becomes more critical with supplies dwindling. So far our country has done hardly anything to prepare for more efficient transportation systems to avoid immobilizing the nation in the years ahead..... CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION Department ran into a crisis this month when the state's transportation plan met with Gov. Brown's disapproval because it seemed to go too far in setting economic disincentives for automobile usage. But on Dec 17 the state's Transportation Board voted to re-do the plan without the "fundamental changes" in philosophy that Brown wanted..... THE RAIL FILM "Silver Streak" described here last issue is receiving mixed reviews. An Orange County newspaper called the film "a delectable early Christmas present from 20th Century-Fox" while the Wall Street Journal's reviewer found it

"deadly dull." Current ads do indeed show a CP train (bursting thru a wall of "Union Station") rather than the Rio Grande train we pictured last issue. Our illustration was from a preliminary ad layout obtained for us last summer by Paul Rayton, who has connections in Hollywood..... GRAND OLD MAN of railroading, John Barriger III died Dec 9 at the age of 77, shortly after reaching his 50th wedding anniversary, which he was too ill to celebrate. Barriger had been president of four different railroads, and since last April was a special consultant to the Rock Island. His railroad career began in 1917 when he started work as a shop hand with the Pennsy. He leaves his wife and four children and grandchildren. One son is a Santa Fe vice president..... SPECIAL HOLIDAY MENU will be offered on all Amtrak full-service dining cars on Dec 23-25, 30, 31, and Jan 1. For $4.50 (kids $3.50) a dinner will include roast turkey or baked ham, with green salad, potatoes or candied yams, vegetables, rolls, fruit cup or juice, pumpkin pie and whipped cream or ice cream, and beverage..... CANADIAN BUS COMPANIES seem just as hostile to train service as their American counterparts. The December issue of Russell's Bus Guide contains a one-page statement by the president of Canada's Ontario Motor Coach Association. Quote: "The CN seems to be more aggressively intent than ever to maintain a strong presence in the passenger transportation business at the expense of we taxpayers." He mentions the corridor upgradings and new trains, as well as low air fare excursions..... THE SAN DIEGAN track is in some jeopardy: a 70-foot section appears to be in danger of collapsing onto the beach at Encinitas CA, where severe erosion of the seaside cliffs has been especially bad in the last 18 months...

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NEW YORK TIMES travel section each week prints compilations of what's happening tourist-wise at different spots. Frequently the paper neglects to mention rail travel in its summary of how to reach the location. But on Dec 12, as it covered the Mid-Hudson Valley, the Times started off its "Getting There" summary with this commendable statement: "Perhaps the most scenic way to travel through the Hudson Valley is by the Amtrak train that follows the river's east bank... The trip offers continuous views of the river and the mountains to the west--and a spectacular prospect of West Point." The paper said the trip is "especially pleasurable" in one of the new Turboliners..... NATIONAL ARBITRATION PANEL was hearing arguments on the issue of whether Southern California's EL CAMINO train is commuter or inter-city (see last issue), reports the Wall Street Journal. The arguments were presented Dec 15, and a decision is expected in about a month..... VICTORIA STATION RESTAURANT chain, with the railroad motif, is losing money, reports the San Francisco Chronicle. The firm, which began in San Francisco, owns 54 restaurants and plans to open up to 12 this year and 14 next year..... WASHINGTON UNION STATION mess is again in the news. The Washington Post editorialized last month about the "boondoggle" it has become, with tremendous cost overruns for the National Visitors Center which has turned into an uncoordinated mess. The paper said the renaissance of rail travel on the East Coast had probably been set back by the mess, and suggested that the government buy the whole thing and run it as a separate authority under DOT, to provide the intermodal center it was supposed to be. Congress will be voting next year on how to rescue the Center. The Post reported later that the FBI is investigating possible financial scandals involving one of the designers of the Center, possibly accounting for some of the cost overruns..... BLUE WATER LIMITED will get its schedule shortened by 40 minutes in the near future, comes an unconfirmed report from Michigan. Part of the time savings will come from installation of CTC equipment at Lansing and Flint, paid for by Amtrak. Another unconfirmed report on schedule speedups says that the Missouri Pacific will raise its speed limit for the INTER-AMERICAN after restoration of superelevation on curves, again paid for by Amtrak. Conductors all along the line are reportedly talking about a hoped-for 79mph limit, as against the present low 60mph speed..... THE COAST STARLIGHT in October kept its rating as the nation's most-patronized long distance train with a total of 33,570 passengers carried--a whopping 37% increase over October 1975.....

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION decided Dec 13 to amend regulation 17 regarding meals on passenger trains to read as follows: "Carriers operating trains which travel for 2 hours or more shall make complete meals available during customary dining hours." We spend more time and achieve less understanding when reading ICC pronouncements than any other source of news . The legalese and obfuscation in their "communications" is simply incredible--the epitome of bureaucracy. Do we need the ICC at all?..... SOUTHBOUND PANAMA LIMITED was seen leaving Memphis on Dec 4, in the days following the recent snafus--the Thanksgiving derailment and subsequent shifting of equipment and the freezing up of steam pipes in some cars in early December--7 hours 50 mins late, hauled by an ICG 8000-series geep. Train was annulled south of Jackson MS and was turned to protect the schedule of northbound PANAMA. Buses were substituted for train 59 south of Jackson.....

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A MEXICAN READER writes to inform us that the AZTEC EAGLE has just returned to San Miguel Allende, after 7 years of by-passing that delightfully typical Mexican Colonial town, since a re-routing over a shortcut east of there. Southbound the train now leaves Nuevo Laredo daily at 6:55pm and arrives in San Miguel Allende at 1:09 next afternoon and reaches Mexico City at 8:04pm, as before. Northbound it leaves Mexico City at 8am and San Miguel Allende at 2:35pm, reaching Nuevo Laredo at 7:20 next morning. Roundtrip fares Nuevo Laredo to Mexico City are $37.44 in roomette or $63.92 for two in bedroom. Reader Raymond Pieri offers to obtain tickets for readers if you send him the above fares in cashier's check to Apartado Postal 201, San Miguel Allende, Mexico..... EASTERN THANKSGIVING BUSINESS was estimated to be 10-15% higher out of NY than last year. An extra section of the LAKE SHORE was run to Albany on Nov 28, using turbo equipment..... AMTRAK EXPECTS SERVICE between Peoria and Chicago over Rock Island and Santa Fe tracks to begin in about 18 months to 2 years. Building of a connection to the Santa Fe would take about 6 months, and it is hoped that work can begin in the spring.....

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NORTH COAST HIAWATHA will operate daily instead of tri-weekly during the period of Dec 15 thru Jan 5..... GREYHOUND'S VICE PRESIDENT for marketing came out with a heavy criticism of Amtrak and its government subsidies, printed prominently in the L.A. Times of Dec 9. The bus company singled out the successful SAN DIEGAN line, and said that Amtrak is receiving subsidies of a million dollars a day from taxpayers. An Amtrak spokesman in response said that it was wrong to single out Amtrak, since all public transportation systems are subsidized directly or indirectly. He said we should stop fighting among ourselves and concentrate on getting people out of the automobile, which still carries 80% of the passengers who travel between L.A. and San Diego. Early figures showed that the SAN DIEGAN line experienced a 94% rise in patronage in November, after a 95% jump in October..... AIR FLORIDA BEGAN on Dec 15 five daily nonstop 727 flights Jakcsonville to Miami, $2.00 less than rail coach fares. On Jan 10 Amtrak is expected to establish round trip excursion rates at 1½ times the one-way rate on these routes: NY-Montreal (ADIRONDACK), NY-Savannah (PALMETTO), some NATIONAL LTD trips, NY-Detroit, Orlando-Miami and Orlando-St. Petersburg. Starting Jan 5, excursion off-peak fares within the Northeast Corridor and within the Empire Service will no longer apply on Fri and Sun (formerly were good before noon and after 6pm those days)....

RTN's long-awaited Rail Travel Yearbook 1975 will be published on Dec. 30. Be sure your order is in. $3.50 per copy postpaid (add tax in Calif.). Order from: MESSAGE MEDIA, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

CARS & CONSISTS

*Southern Railway's PIEDMONT was officially discontinued after Nov 22, the railroad ran it thru Nov 28 as the "Holiday Special." Last consist of Special: engines 6147, 6148; cars 1727 bag, 951 coach bar lounge, coaches 838, 834, 907, 1042.

*SOUTHERN CRESCENT, Amtrak train Advance 171, New Haven Nov 28: engines 209, 213 (F40's), changed to 920 (GG1); power car 1291; cars 21131, 21023, 21159, 20024, 21059, 21160, 21209, 21208. Same, regular 171: engines 207, 200 (F40's), changed to 956 (E60); cars 21053, 21837, 20021, 21025, 21097, 21163, 21810, 20121, 21057, 21002, 21807, 20676, unidentified Ambag car.

*PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, train 794, Everett WA Dec 4: engines 216, 218 (F40's); cars 1911 (steam generator), 4827, dome 9500, 4462, 8105, 5235, dome 9465, 4509, 8350, 5691, 4870. Same, Seattle Dec 7: engines 216, 218; cars dome 9500, 8105, 5235, dome 9465, 4509, 8350, 5691, 4870, dome 9801.

*PANAMA LIMITED, train 58, New Orleans Nov 26 (makeup train after Nov 25 derail't): engines ICG 3003, ICG 3047 (GP40's); power car 1920, bag 1160, (deadhead: dome 9202 "Sunlight Dome", 2235 "Venice"), coach 5451, 2212 "Indian Falls", diner 8026, coaches 5602, 5436, obs-lounge 3339. Train 59, Hammond LA Dec 3: engines 700, 708 (P30's), 588 (SDP40F); cars 4841 coach used as baggage, 2305 "Surf Bird", 2816 "Potomac River", 2212 "Indian Falls", diner 8005, coaches 5656, 6087, 5605, obs-lounge 3341. Train 58, same: engine 588, power car 1919; cars coach 6023 used as baggage, 2816 "Potomac River", coaches 5603, 5436, 6022, obs-lounge 3339; no diner due to frozen and burst water pipes in cars 8005 and 2305.

*Amtrak inspection train, "Extra 723 South", leaving Memphis 7:05am Dec 6: engines 723, 700 (P30's), power car 1920 (ex-E8B); baggage 1063, Amfleet power car 1291, Amlounge 20205, Amtrak track inspection car 10,000. Engine 723 had cameras fitted behind fuel tank, directed toward lead axle of rear truck. ICG and Amtrak officials.

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, San Jose Nov 30: engines 571, 559; cars 1107, 1419, 4872, 4530, 4856, 4857, 8106, 4545, 4559, 4460, 3351, 2717 "Pine Fern", 2505 "Blue Mott", deadhead 4869 to L.A. No dome this consist.

*SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, train 5, Omaha Nov 28: engines 622, 585; cars 1102, 1194, 1572, 4819, 4810, 4505, 4816, 4475, dome 9456, dome 9478, 3331, 8072, 2721, 2615, 2201. Train 6, Omaha Dec 11: engines __?, 627; cars SP 6796, 1103, 1189, 1096, 1591, 4818, 4475, dome 9478, 3335, 8050, 2670, 2624.

*MONTREALER, train 60, Dec 1:engines (?); cars 5653, 5662, 5805, 3301, 8338, 2805, 2105, 1514. Train terminated at St. Albans 2pm Dec 2 due to extreme lateness.

*NORTHLAND, CN train 99, leaving Toronto Dec 2: engines 1518, 1801; cars CN 15451 steam generator, ONR bag 411, CN "Endeavour", CN "Exploits River", ONR coach 821, CN 753 cafe lounge, ONR coach 811. Engines removed at Englehart & #1509 added.

*Ontario Northland train 283, Englehart-Noranda, Dec 3: engine 1515 (FP7A), 410 baggage, 801 coach.

*Ontario Northland train 387, Porquis-Timmins Dec 3: engine 1520 (FP7a); baggage 701, coach 811.

*Ontario Northland mixed train 421, Dec 3: engines 1517, 1521 (FP7A's); 11 express cars, baggage 301 & 401, coaches 804, 1405 coach lounge, 805, 806, steam generator 200.

*CN Tempo train 73, Toronto-Windsor Dec 5: engines 3153, 3152, generator car 15301, 323 club galley, 344 coach cafe, coaches 363, 365, 372, 342 coach cafe, coaches 371, 374, 370.

*TWILIGHT LIMITED, train 355 Detroit-Chicago Dec 5: engine 225 (F40); Amclub 20125, Amcoaches 21120, 21151, 21109, Amlounge 20213, Amcoach 21824.

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train 40, Chicago Dec 6: engines 599, 543; cars 1194, 1100, 5614, 5400, 2002, 2023, 5251, 5250, 5256, 3329, 8806-8807, 3210, 2559, 2554.

*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 449, Pittsfield MA Dec 10: engines 285, 295 (E8A's); cars 3630, ~~5800~~, ~~5426~~, 2533, 1192, PC 1596 used as caboose for guiding backup move.

Express Ads

RAIL FANS ONLY! It's easy to secure your AMTRAK & CN reservations and tickets (or USA Rail Pass)--from anywhere in the world. Tickets by mail from GREAT WESTERN TOURS, 639 Market St., San Francisco 94105, or call (415) 398-2994.

DINING CAR DISHES, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, Pullman, stationery, rules, metal items from 25 railroads. Long stamped envelope for list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kan. 67213. (Will buy large and small railroad collections.)

TIMETABLE GRAB BAG BARGAINS. $10 brings you $20 worth of good material back to even the 50's. Also fantastic clear plastic clip covers for public TTs only $7.25 per 100 postpaid. We also buy all timetable collections. Tom Coval, 21 E. Robin Road, Holland PA 18966.

STEAM SAFARI OF SOUTH AFRICA. Three-week tour by minibus May, 1977. Land cost approximately $425.00 plus airfare. Limited to 12 persons. For further information: Leroy Y. Beaujon, 11073 Bel Aire Court, Cupertino, California 95014.

THAT'S RIGHT! Now you can take care of all your reservations, tickets, and unlimited travel passes (USA Rail, ConRail, Eurail, BritRail) at the Mid-West rail specialists: HOOSIERAIL TRAVEL, PO Box 1025, Bloomington IN 47401. 812-336-2400.

GIVE Secretary Coleman the sendoff he deserves--contribute to the fund to operate the RASPBERRY ROCKET between Washington and Boston for Coleman's departure. Tell all the crazy people you know to be sure to be aboard this special runout.

SUNSET LTD. AND DELTA QUEEN!--Take Amtrak's Sunset from West Coast to Houston, Tex., ride steam paddle-wheeler to New Orleans, December thru March. See Amtrak-specialist travel agent for details today!

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads $25 per half-page (maximum size--4x5 inches); $12.50 per quarter page. Write to: Message Media, Ad Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Thank you!

DON'T MISS THE "TRAIN OF THE YEAR"!

In the next issue, Rail Travel News will make its first annual Train of the Year award. This event is designed to call attention to and honor the one train--and its supporters--which in the opinion of the editors has advanced the cause of rail travel the most in the past year.

Don't miss this feature in our year-end issue, out two weeks from now.

ANNOUNCING A NEW RAIL TRAVEL NEWS FEATURE:

In response to popular demand, RTN will inaugurate in January a new department, to appear monthly (in alternate issues) which lists special passenger train and railfan trips that are upcoming. There will be no charge for this service. Trip sponsors will be asked to submit information on dates, destination, fares, and name and address of sponsoring organization. Each trip will be listed once at no cost. For expanded description or additional listings, sponsors can also make use of our regular Express Ads department at low cost. RTN reserves the right to condense and edit material submitted. Address info to: Rail Travel News, Fantrip Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA.